

ONLINE COUNTERPOINT 7.7

The intention or rationale may be framed in terms of a `direct' relationship but the practice may depart markedly from this ambition or rationalization. In practice, the mission may be unclear or contested, leaving much room for interpretation. Even if there is clarity, there may be conflicting views between senior managers or between divisions and groups in a company about how which `core technology' is most appropriate or effective for realizing the mission.

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When considering how core technology influences organizational structure, it is relevant to bear in mind the reverse relationship. Core technologies are adopted and adapted through the medium of existing structures that may constrain as well as enable their introduction and an effective operation.

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The distinction between core and non-core technology can be a dangerous and misleading one. That is because seemingly non-core departments may be critical for realizing the mission. Take, for example, HRM or Accounting. It may be the case that specialists from these departments are not directly involved in, for example, producing tyres (although these functions are increasingly `distributed' so there may well be an HRM or Accounting presence in the manufacturing areas who acts as a hybrid boundary spanner). But the input from such departments may be vital for ensuring the operation of core technologies – for example, by recruiting or retaining key personnel or averting strike activity.

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Margarita Windisch

'Autoliv victimises injured workers'

19 April 2008

Last month, four injured workers had their light duties suspended by Campbellfield car parts manufacturer Autoliv and were told that they should consider taking "voluntary" redundancy packages.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) organiser Chris Spindler told Green Left Weekly that "voluntary packages" did not exist in the enterprise agreement. He said the company "is trying to get out of paying people a proper redundancy and they are just not serious about meeting their responsibilities to help workers get back to work".

None of the four workers who had received their injuries during their employment with Autoliv have been paid since they were put off work and only one is eligible for WorkCover payments

Olga Sulema, who was put off work in February after 14 years at Autoliv, told the April 1 Hume Weekly that she couldn't get entitlements for WorkCover payments because she wasn't working and didn't know where to find the money to make ends meet.

Spindler told GLW that the four women workers want to go back to work. The union, he said, is "very keen to negotiate a plan to make that happen". He said the AMWU proposes that the four workers be returned to light duties so they can recover from their injuries while still working. If no genuine light duties are available, he said, the workers should have the opportunity to be retrained on full pay.

On April 3, a mass meeting of AMWU members at Autoliv voted to take support action if the company targets any other workers on light duties and if it refuses to implement a negotiated outcome of the dispute over the four women workers.

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/2008/747/38640>

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If only! It is hardly unknown for customers to be deeply unhappy about such service. It is not unusual for a stylist to 'experiment' at the customer's expense or to ignore requests if they do not fit with the stylist's preconceptions or range of skills. Stylists that are highly sought-after can afford to impose their own preferences, at least in the short term!

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From the employee's perspective, this may involve performing a series of equally boring tasks. Sticking to one task may, for some employees, be preferable to being shunted around in the name of 'job enrichment'.

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Such changes may also create greater demands and stress but without a corresponding rise in pay and/or conditions to compensate for the additional effort demanded. The outcome may be a reduction rather than an increase in job satisfaction.

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Such developments are often represented as positive 'results for employees' but this takes no account of how such changes are interpreted by employees. As the previous counterpoints have indicated, such changes are not necessarily unequivocally welcome as they can have negative as well as beneficial consequences for employees.